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ON BEHALF OF THE

BRITISH SUBJECTS

RESIDING IN AND CONNECTED WITH

THE RIVER PLATE,

AGAINST

ANY FURTHER VIOLENT INTERVENTION

BY THE

BRITISH AND FRENCH GOVERNMENTS

IN THE

AFFAIRS OF THAT COUNTRY.

PRINTED BY NORRIS AND SON,

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1846.

A N A P P E A L,

ETC. ETC.

THE public have long been accustomed to hear of the unsettled state of affairs in the River Plate; yet but very few persons have felt sufficient interest in the matter to induce them to make themselves thoroughly acquainted with it. Nor was this at all to be wondered at, so long as this country abstained from interfering in the quarrel there; but now that Government have shewn a disposition to take a part, the case is changed, and it becomes the duty of those who from their position have a voice in the conduct of public affairs to inform themselves correctly on the subject. Nor should this duty be omitted on the plea that Government have better means of information than private individuals can have, and would not act without good grounds; for it is believed a very slight examination will shew that Government are acting in this matter under a misapprehension with reference both to the justice of the case and the true interests of all concerned.

Aware of the importance of brevity, we shall with these remarks proceed at once to our narrative, taking it up at the year 1838, from which period dates the origin of all the recent disasters in the River Plate. At that time General Rosas was at the head of the government of Buenos Ayres, which is the chief province of the Argentine Confederation, on its south bank ; and General Oribe at the head of that of the republic of the Uruguay, of which Monte Video is the capital, on the north bank.

In the beginning of that year, the French commenced their blockade of Buenos Ayres, and having no port of their own in which to condemn or sell their prizes, they wished to make use of Monte Video for that and other hostile purposes against Buenos Ayres, but General Oribe refused to join in this attack upon the sister republic, and determined on remaining neutral. The French agents thereupon stirred up an armed revolution against him—he was defeated—signed a forced abdication—and retired to Buenos Ayres.

In his stead was placed in the presidency General Rivera, who, indebted for his elevation to the French, repaid them by lending himself entirely to their plans. The defeat of General Oribe had been owing mainly to the help of a body of disaffected Buenos Ayreans who had taken refuge in Monte Video, and had joined Rivera and the French. By this triple union hostilities were carried on against Buenos Ayres with the greatest vigour—an army

was marched into her territory—and reached almost within sight of the capital. Thus powerfully assailed, every one supposed she must fall, when apparently, as by a miracle, she rallied, the invaders were repulsed, and ultimately defeated and destroyed. The French, too, suddenly patched up a peace with her, and discontinued their blockade, which had lasted nearly three years.

It is important to remark here that the British Government did not interfere at all in behalf of Buenos Ayres while she was in these straits, but left her altogether to her own resources.

The hostility of the Monte Videans against Buenos Ayres was not at all mitigated by the loss of their French allies. On the contrary, after a formal declaration of war, they again invaded the Argentine territory, where they were finally defeated in December, 1842.

On this occasion the Buenos Ayrean forces were commanded by the Ex-president Oribe. On his ejection from Monte Video for his refusal to take part against Buenos Ayres, General Rosas had in return promised to aid him, at the first fitting opportunity, to regain his position at Monte Video. In the mean time he had been employing himself in the service of Buenos Ayres.

After this victory, he in his turn marched into the territory of the Monte Videan state, the whole of which, in the course of time, submitted to his authority, excepting only the city of Monte Video.

Not having the means of taking it by storm, he invested it closely by land, and proposed to do the same by sea, by the aid of the Buenos Ayres squadron, which was placed at his disposal. But the English and French agents, though never going so far as openly to deny the legality of the blockade, prevented under various pretexts its ever being put in force.

This was the state of things in June last—Oribe posted close outside the city of Monte Video—the Buenos Ayres squadron in front, waiting permission from the English and French agents to invest it on the sea-side,—the inside party already thinking of making terms—when England and France interposed in favour of Monte Video, and commenced a series of measures which threaten a fresh war.

It will be seen from the above that the intervention of the two powers does not appear to be based upon any principle of justice. This is in favour rather of Oribe and Buenos Ayres, because the former is only seeking to regain his lost presidency, and the latter merely repaying the friendship of Oribe, and endeavouring to guard against a recurrence of the attacks of Monte Video.

Nor can we account for the intervention by any advantages it may be expected to bring to this country, for the only tie hitherto between us and the River Plate has been that of commerce, the ruin of which will be the infallible result of the intervention if persisted in.

Still, as Government, it may be supposed, would not have acted without good reasons, we propose to show, that, (though no doubt with the best intentions,) they have acted wrong from incorrect information.

One of the main inducements for their interference seems to have been an idea that Buenos Ayres is desirous of destroying the existence of Monte Video as an independent state. Now, the only colour for this apprehension is the circumstance of Oribe employing Buenos Ayrean troops in his service. But if certain Buenos Ayreans helped to turn him out, why should not others of the same nation help to reinstate him? That Buenos Ayres should wish to have a friendly neighbour in Monte Video instead of an unfriendly one is quite natural. The same feeling induced us to assist in ejecting Napoleon from the throne of France, and placing the Bourbons in his stead, only we had none of the French on our side, whereas Oribe has more of his countrymen for him than against him. Yet no one would say that the independence of France has been destroyed by our interference on that occasion. Moreover, both Buenos Ayres and Oribe have constantly denied any such intention, and he is a native of the Uruguay State, and for three years filled the office of President of it without any imputation upon his patriotism; indeed his jealousy of the independence of his country, which made him refuse to become a tool in the hands of the

French, was the cause of his ejection. Surely, therefore, this fear must be allowed to be without any rational foundation.

Even were it otherwise, it does not seem clear for what reason we should interfere in the matter. It can hardly be said to be the duty of this country to adjust the relations of the different states to each other all over the world. We do not appear always so to have considered it, for we allowed Santa Cruz, when President of Bolivia, to subjugate a great portion of the west coast of South America without troubling ourselves at all about it. True, it has been said we are bound by treaty to uphold the independence of the Uruguay republic, but those who have so stated could cite nothing in proof of their assertion but a preliminary convention made in 1828 between Buenos Ayres and Brazil, to which neither England nor Monte Video were even parties, and which is besides quite irrelevant to the question. Brazil and Buenos Ayres, who had been fighting for the possession of the Uruguay territory, agreed by this convention that it should belong to neither, but should form a state by itself, and that they would uphold its legal government against all attacks upon it for five years, and after that time for such further period as should be agreed upon in a definitive treaty of peace to be afterwards made. As this, however, has not yet been made, and as the first five years have long expired, the convention may be said to be now virtually a dead letter ; but

if not, and if it be held still to be in force, it favours rather than condemns the interference of Buenos Ayres, because one of its main stipulations being that the two contracting powers should render all necessary assistance to the legal government of Monte Video; and Oribe being considered by Buenos Ayres the legal President, the aid furnished to him by her is obviously quite in accordance with the spirit of the treaty.

A notion, which it is believed has made some impression on Her Majesty's Government, is that General Rosas has a project in his mind for excluding foreigners from the River Plate, and that it is necessary to uphold an antagonist government in Monte Video in order to counteract it. Now the course followed thus far by the Buenos Ayres Government with reference to foreign trade, does not give any countenance to this fear. It is a mere assumption destitute of any proof, and to act upon it as if it were an ascertained fact, would be neither just nor reasonable.

We should be quite in good time to counteract any such intention when it took the form of action, for not all the armies of South America could hold out Monte Video for one day against an adequate British naval force. There can be therefore no wisdom in now taking measures which will involve a great loss and expense, for the sake of guarding against an evil which may never arise, and which may easily and immediately be removed if it should.

The charge against the Buenos Ayres Government of hostility to foreign commerce has originated mainly from certain interruptions to the local and coasting trade, which have occurred in the course of this war. One of the most notable was their interdiction in January last of all trade with Corrientes and Paraguay, so long as the former province should remain in the hands of the persons who had revolted against the lawful authorities. This decree was not merely no proof of hostility to trade, but it was, under the circumstances, in every sense of the word, a justifiable one. Corrientes had seized and confiscated a number of vessels belonging to Buenos Ayres, with their cargoes, which were going up the river through its territory to Paraguay. The Government of Buenos Ayres might have retaliated by seizing the vessels of Corrientes, but they contented themselves with simply forbidding all intercourse with that province so long as the hostile party should remain in power, that they might not by a repetition of similar acts be enabled to furnish themselves with resources at the expense of the citizens of Buenos Ayres. It certainly is not reasonable to complain of such a decree issued under such provocation.

All the other interruptions to trade have been in like manner temporary—limited in extent and circumstances—adapted for some special purpose—and such as a state of war renders both justifiable and customary; and they no more prove a hostile feeling

to commerce on the part of Buenos Ayres, than does our present blockade of Buenos Ayres prove a hostile feeling to commerce generally on the part of England.

It would be easy to show that Buenos Ayres has always evinced a more even and considerate regard to the interests of trade than Monte Video. The import duties in the former place have not varied for the last fifteen years, being nominally 19 per cent. on cottons, woollens, and linens, and 12 per cent. on silks, but in reality, (owing to the moderate system of valuing goods,) not over 16 to 17 per cent., and 10 to 11 per cent. on the selling prices. In Monte Video, on the contrary, the rates of duty, which in 1839 were 19 per cent. and 10 per cent., were suddenly raised to 27 and 18 per cent., and on the British Consul remonstrating against it, they were raised again to 35 and 26 per cent, being more than double the Buenos Ayres rates. Since the war, they have reduced them, but there being scarcely any business doing, the reduction has been of little advantage.

Another striking proof has just been given of the superior liberality of the Buenos Ayres Government over that of Monte Video, in regard to their mode of treating the commercial interests. The former, in order to relieve the heavy pressure upon the merchants arising from the blockade, have relaxed their custom-house laws, and granted new and important facilities for the payment of the

duties ; whilst the latter, greedy to turn to account a convoy offered by Her Majesty's naval forces up the rivers, refused to allow goods to leave the harbour with it, except on payment of a new duty of 6 per cent. Most of these goods were originally destined for Buenos Ayres, but being forbidden entry there by the British blockading squadron, had no other resource but to take refuge in the harbour of Monte Video. Thus our blockade drives goods in there, for them to levy tribute upon. As a tax of 20 per cent. would be as justifiable as one of 6 per cent., it will be surprising if it be not increased. On goods lying in their bonded warehouses—placed there (as the term “ bonded ” implies) on the clear understanding that they were to be reshipped without payment of *any* duty—a tax of 4 per cent. was levied. These two contemporary incidents show how untruly Buenos Ayres has been stated to be less favorable to commerce than her neighbour.

Pains have been taken to represent the trade of Monte Video as of more consequence than that of Buenos Ayres. It would be easy to bring figures to show that this is not true, but it is not worth while to weary our readers with them. It is sufficient to say, that if the trade is left to its natural course, each port will get such portion of it as the convenience of its situation and other local circumstances attract to it. Nor is it of any importance to this country which has the most, nor have we

any interest in depressing one or favouring the other. To our merchants and manufacturers it is immaterial to which they send most of their goods. At whichever their customers prefer purchasing, they can deliver them. It would be easy to pick out years when, owing to the blockade of Buenos Ayres, Monte Video was doing the largest business, and, vice versâ, others in which, owing to the war in Monte Video, Buenos Ayres was. But to argue from such figures, that the one was of more importance than the other, would be as silly as if, shutting up all the doors of the Royal Exchange but one, you were to say, *that* one must be the most important door, because everybody then went in and out by it. From the statistics of the trade, however, one very important fact would appear, which is, that when either Buenos Ayres or Monte Video is shut, the amount of business done in the port that remains open is very far short of the total amount that is done in both ports when both are open. So that our interest is to keep both open, and to let the people of the country suit themselves as to which they find it most convenient to resort to.

A great deal has been said of the importance of the markets of Corrientes and Paraguay, and of the hardship of their being closed to our commerce. We have already shown that the closing of these markets is only temporary, produced by the war, and sure to end with it. It was under the present Government of Buenos Ayres, that the communica-

tion with Paraguay was opened, after having been closed by its own Government for thirty years, and it would have remained open till this day, but for the unjustifiable act of Corrientes above mentioned. Violence, therefore, is not only needless for opening the interior rivers, but will probably even defeat our object, for they never can be permanently and really kept open, without the good-will and consent of the people of the countries they flow through. As respects the supposed importance of these markets, the value of the trade with Corrientes may be estimated by the amount of its population, which Sir W. Parish estimated at 35,000 to 40,000 in 1836-7. Paraguay, on the principle of *omne ignotum pro magnifico*, has been represented in a light altogether imaginative. The expectations formed of it were much disappointed on its opening in 1842. The people were found to be in almost the lowest stage of mental existence. Their staple product, the Yerba, is worthless in Europe, and the consumption of it is limited to a very small portion of South America, so that it would be useless for them to increase the growth of it, as they would find no market for the additional quantity. The same may be said of their tobacco, which is equally unsuitable for the European markets. In short they have no exports worth speaking of that would find sale in Europe, and the idea of any large trade with them is the merest chimera. Sir W. Parish estimates their population at 250,000, but even if it were ten

times the number, their backwardness in the arts of useful industry would make them of little importance to us as customers. The population of the Argentine provinces is estimated by the same authority at 600,000 to 675,000, and of the single province of Buenos Ayres alone at 180,000 to 200,000. It may be safely affirmed that one week of its consumption of British manufactures is worth a whole year's of that of Paraguay. There would be no inducement therefore to sacrifice the one trade for the other, even if we could not have them both ; but still less is there, as with a little patience the trade of Paraguay, such as it is, will be sure to revert to us, without the expenditure of a single shilling.

The plea of humanity—a very popular one, and one very likely to be abused—has been put forward to justify this interference. Six years ago, when the Monte Videans invaded Buenos Ayres, or even three years ago, when the tables turned and the Buenos Ayreans invaded Monte Video, there might have been some humanity in interfering in an effectual manner, to put a stop (if possible) to this war. But after allowing it to rage unchecked in all its fierceness for six years, and after waiting till it has literally burned itself out, and is on the point of expiring, so to speak, for want of fuel, there is certainly no humanity in rekindling it. Can we restore to life the thousands that have perished, or blot out the atrocities that have been committed, or replace the property that has been destroyed, or

undo the ruin that has been caused? Or shall we not rather renew and perpetuate these evils, and in endeavouring to wrest from Oribe what it has taken him so many years to gain, cause even still greater ones?

Besides, the difficulty of the task is much greater now, than if we had interfered earlier; then, there was a strong party which by means of our assistance might have made head against Oribe. But it is now extinct—its last defeat at India Muerta in March, 1845, gave it the coup-de-grace. There is not now a man in arms against him in the whole country, excepting in the city of Monte Video. Even there, they are destitute of provisions—ammunition—money—every thing requisite. All, therefore, would now have to be done by our own unassisted efforts.

That the intervention has not met with the success which appears, without much consideration, to have been anticipated for it, is to be attributed rather to the unreasonableness of our demands, than to obstinacy on the part of Oribe and his ally. For the last seven years, let it be borne in mind, this chief has devoted his life and energies to one sole object—the re-establishment of his authority in his native country, over which he was undeniably the lawful ruler, when ejected by the French. At the moment when he sees it on the point of being realized, we, professing the strictest impartiality, require him, not to make some slight sacrifice in

favor of his adversaries, but to throw away the whole of his advantages, and to submit to terms at our hands, which, had he been defeated and utterly prostrate, instead of triumphantly victorious, he might even then almost have objected to as being too unfavourable. Our demand is nothing less than that he should immediately evacuate the territory of his country, leaving it in full possession of his adversaries, to whom, after having lost the game they had played for, we thus propose he should return the whole of the stakes.

There may be some, perhaps, whom it will not surprise to hear, that as the French were from the first at the bottom of all these disasters, so they have throughout, consistently, had a principal share in prolonging them. In a dispatch from M. Guizot to Count St. Aulaire, dated 21st January, 1845,* which has been just published, the former distinctly states, that but for the rebellious conduct of a number of the French subjects in Monte Video, who in defiance of the repeated orders of their Government to lay down their arms, and abstain from any farther part in this war, obstinately refused to do so, the war would long ago have terminated. The conclusion that any fair person would have come to on witnessing this contumacy, would, one should think, have been to enforce the orders of the Government, and compel these parties

* See Appendix A.

to observe the neutrality which was held to be their duty. But quite the contrary to this, M. Guizot concludes that as they will not obey their Government, their Government must obey them ; and he decides, accordingly, to take part with them against Oribe, as he has done.

One of the schemes by which these Frenchmen in Monte Video evaded the orders of their own Government is worthy of being mentioned. On being required by Admiral Lainé to lay down their arms, they did so *as French subjects, and immediately took them up again as citizens of the Oriental Republic*, and have held them as such ever since. When we see such a farcical proceeding as this not only winked at by the French Government, but actually rewarded with their assistance, it is difficult to believe they were ever sincerely desirous that their orders should be obeyed.

Neither, perhaps, would it be easy to prove to other nations that the conduct of our own Government is altogether beyond suspicion in this respect. The impartiality that has been professed at home has not been put in practice at the scene of action. Many measures which were calculated to hasten the termination of the war—amongst which we may particularly mention the blockade of Monte Video—were opposed and prevented by our officers on the station, in manifest breach of our neutrality ; and the prolongation of the war which

Oribe is justly entitled to attribute to our own acts and those of the French, is now assigned by us as one of the principal grounds for our interfering to finish it—not *for*, but *against* him.

If these circumstances have indisposed Oribe from viewing our intervention with a favourable eye, it can scarcely be wondered at. In whichever direction he looks throughout the affair, he sees nothing but foreign intermeddling. The sons of the soil are altogether thrown into the background. Foreigners caused the war—foreigners have carried it on,—foreigners have ever interposed to prevent its ending,—foreigners are in possession of his capital city, and holding it out against the almost unanimous consent of the natives,—and, last of all, two foreign nations gravely come forward to blame him for the acts of their own subjects, and to second them. Those who complain that he has not readily consented to the sacrifices we have demanded of him, can scarcely, we think, have made due allowance for these circumstances.

The peculiar system of hostilities by which our Government seem to expect to carry their point, will, it is feared, be found as disastrous to third and innocent parties, as it will be inoperative on those against whom it is directed. For three years Buenos Ayres withstood the blockade of the French, and it was then only ended by their greatly modifying their pretensions. The power of General Rosas was then not nearly so firmly established as

it is now—his enemies were far more numerous and confident—the blockade was a new weapon of offence to him—its weakness had not then been proved—nor was he prepared for it as he now is. Taking all these things into account, it may be concluded that we have even less chance of gaining our end by the blockade than the French had, and that if Rosas then stood out for three years, he now may for twice three.

We are also in a much more disadvantageous situation for conducting it than they were. After they had turned out Oribe from Monte Video, they had the whole of the resources of that republic at their disposal, both for aiding their warlike operations and for refitting and provisioning their squadron. We, on the contrary, have not the means of buying a single pound of fresh provisions, because every inch of ground on both sides of the river is in possession of Rosas and Oribe, excepting the city of Monte Video, Colonia, and one or two other points that we may have taken. Even these, instead of being a help to us, are the reverse, for they are so closely invested by land, that they are in the greatest straits for provisions, and the price of fresh beef in Monte Video, which in ordinary times is about one penny per lb., was, according to the last advices, about two shillings, besides being very bad, having to be brought by sea from the Brazils. Poultry, eggs, and all other such articles were equally dear.

Some reliance is apparently placed by the British agents in the Plate on the cooperation of the people of Corrientes, who are in revolt against the authority of Buenos Ayres, and an attempt was about to be made to effect a junction with them by means of an expedition of our war steamers up the river Parana. They are, however, known to be destitute of every thing that is necessary—and should they be induced by us to leave their shelter, and take the field against the veteran troops of Oribe's generals, it is very much to be feared that we shall have to answer for their destruction.

Our position in the Plate therefore is this. We have possession of the rivers—and of any point on the coast we may choose to take. The authorities we are in opposition to have possession of the whole of the country—of the food—and of what is there the most important implement of warfare—the *horses*. If we take a point on the coast, we do not get an inch of ground with it. For that, we require troops, and above all *cavalry*. Our squadron, and the population of Monte Video and of the other points in our possession, must live entirely upon imported food, which we must pay for. Meanwhile the troops of Oribe are living in clover—all they are used to is beef, and they have at their disposal the cattle of the whole country without any need of paying for it. Such few foreign articles as they need they can purchase from the Brazils, whose frontier joins theirs, and the wants of their exchequer can at all times be readily supplied by

sales of cattle to the Brazilians, who are ready customers for them. Oribe is thus untouched by our operations, and it would scarcely be an exaggeration to say that to blockade our own Portsmouth or Liverpool would be almost as likely a method of effecting what we wish as the blockades we are instituting in the River Plate.

We have not yet adverted, except cursorily, to the interests of the merchants and others connected with the River Plate, but justice requires these should not be overlooked. They complain that the war has already been prolonged for three years by the intermeddling of the British agents and officers. Had strict impartiality been observed by these, Monte Video would, upon the defeat of Rivera in 1842, have received back Oribe as President; and many times since then the end of the strife was seen to be at hand, if it had not been warded off by foreign interference. So directly have our efforts tended to prolong the war, that a bystander would have supposed we thought our interest lay in doing so. The result has been the loss of nearly all the debts due in the country to the merchants, amounting to upwards of half a million sterling, the destruction of a great deal of other British property, and the loss to them of three years' trade. The more open intervention now commenced will, instead of repairing or in any way compensating for these losses, on the contrary prolong and extend them. No trade of any consequence can exist in Monte Video under such circumstances as we have

described, so that to the three years already lost will be added we know not how many more. In Buenos Ayres, also, will be repeated what has occurred at Monte Video, but on a much larger scale. There will be the same loss there of present debts and of future trade. The number of British settlers engaged in rural and other pursuits is very large, and a continuance of the blockade will ruin most of them and seriously injure all. It has not been thought an exaggerated estimate to reckon the probable loss to British subjects, from a persistence in the late fatal measures, at more than two millions sterling.

The merchants during the trying circumstances of the last four years were in the habit of looking up to Her Majesty's Ministers as their best and, indeed, their only guides in the regulation of their operations; and relying upon their repeated assurances in Parliament that they would not interfere, further than by making the offer of their friendly mediation, they were altogether taken by surprise by the late proceedings. Had the slightest indication been given of any intention of adopting violent measures, they would assuredly have at once suspended their shipments to Buenos Ayres, and brought their affairs generally into the very smallest possible compass. In this way they would have escaped any serious actual loss of property, and would only have had to complain of the deprivation of their trade, which, even by itself, however, would

have been no trifling evil. But as it is, they feel they have been misled—not intentionally they believe, but from want of due consideration—and that they have been placed in their present unpleasant situation by the inconsiderateness and inconsistency of those whose high position makes such faults extensively and fatally injurious.

Nor has any change in the position of affairs occurred since Ministers made the declarations referred to which can account for the change in their conduct. Everything remains as it was, except that the cause of our protégés having become more helpless, the success of our interference is rendered more hopeless. If it be said the war has now lasted so long that it was high time we should put a stop to it, it may be replied that it is entirely our own fault it was not finished long ago, and that what we are now about to do will not shorten it, but on the contrary indefinitely prolong it.

We cannot help specially directing attention to a few examples of the contradiction between the declarations of Ministers and the proceedings of their agents. Lord Aberdeen declared* that Buenos Ayres was the lawful authority for closing the rivers, and yet her having done so in prosecution of her belligerent rights is one of the heaviest charges brought against her, and a British force is, probably at this very moment, engaged in forcing them open

* See Appendix B.

against the will of this same lawful authority. Sir Robert Peel showed,* in the clearest manner, how useless it would be for us to try to suppress the hostilities by force, because, even if we succeeded, the moment we turned our backs they would be sure to commence again; and yet we are now committing this very folly which he so well exposed. On another occasion he stated,† that Rosas had a perfect right to institute a blockade of Monte Video, and that this country would acknowledge it:—and yet at the very same period of time our Minister at Buenos Ayres was obstinately refusing to do so, and shortly after proceeded himself to institute a blockade of Buenos Ayres, because that Government insisted on doing what our Prime Minister was saying they had a perfect right to do. It is quite impossible to imagine any satisfactory solution of these contradictions, but such serious evils will result from a continued departure from the sound views contained in the declarations referred to, that it is to be hoped Ministers will not be slow in returning to them.

If a mistake has been committed, the sooner it is acknowledged and set right the better. It will be much easier to do so now than a year hence, by which time the question may become complicated in a way very difficult to disentangle. Nor need we be ashamed to retrace our steps, for no one will think

* See Appendix C.

† Ibid.

of accusing us of doing so *from fear*. It will cost our pride much less to acknowledge our error with a power like Buenos Ayres than it would if it were with France or the United States. The settlement of the matter is an easy and simple one, if a common sense view of the question be taken, devoid of partiality and prejudice. When Mr. Ouseley left this country, we did not know of the battle of India Muerta which destroyed the last remnants of Rivera's army—drove him an exile into the Brazils—and left Oribe in undisputed possession of every inch of the territory—the city excepted. The complete reinstatement of his authority over the whole of the Uruguay Republic was not then a *fait accompli*, but it is now. Such an important change in circumstances may well produce a change in our measures, and will justify our refusing to oppose ourselves any longer to the issue which events have made irresistible.

If our countenance were withdrawn, the city of Monte Video would soon follow the example of the rest of the republic, and acknowledge the authority of Oribe. We could easily obtain from him satisfactory guarantees for the security of life and property, and the whole matter would thus be settled almost in a day. Trade would be resumed on both sides of the Plate, the property of the merchants and settlers be saved, and the cost in life and money of a long war be avoided. The only persons who would suffer by it would

be those who have advanced their money for the express purpose of keeping the losing party in power. But they knew the risk they ran, and stipulated for advantages proportioned to it—such as premiums varying from 100 to 500 per cent. and even more—in the event of success. It is scarcely to be supposed an opportunity will be rejected of restoring peace, merely for the purpose of securing to these parties a favourable issue to their speculations.

The only alternative is war; and to have any chance of terminating it successfully, we must send out a large expedition. The intervention had lasted, at the date of the last advices, nearly four months, and not the slightest progress had been made towards the objects of it by the measures adopted. It is now manifest to all that Oribe will not voluntarily obey our summons to relinquish the possession of the Uruguay territory and his claim to the Presidentship. So far from thinking of doing so, he has lately assembled legislative chambers composed of the members of those in existence when he was ejected. Force, therefore, is the only means of accomplishing our object; and to make head successfully against both Rosas and Oribe will require, it is computed by competent persons, at the very least 10,000 to 15,000 men—infantry and cavalry—with everything necessary for them. The parties whose allies we should in that case be are destitute of almost everything, but particularly so

of money ; and so low is their credit, that lately, to enable them to raise a small loan, the British and French envoys were obliged to come forward with a sort of guarantee for its repayment. We shall, therefore, have to furnish not only men, but all the funds requisite in the course of the war.

Such a war as this would probably be a novel one in the history of the world. It would be essentially a war of the British Government against British subjects, for to them belongs the greater part of the destructible property in the River Plate ; and on them, consequently, would fall the greater part of the ruin and havoc it would cause. In its result it would be doubly suicidal ; for the effect of it would be to ruin a number of our fellow-subjects and destroy a valuable branch of trade, and to cause us to spend a great deal of money in doing so. The prosecution of it will bring us no glory, and the result will probably be to reveal to South America the secret of the means of defence which she possesses against European aggression, and to destroy the influence which the prestige of our supposed power has hitherto given us. Nor will the plea of humanity long avail us, for the natural course, and indeed the already published programme of our proceedings is to set at variance the whole people of those countries, and to stir up a civil war which must deluge them with blood. The blockade of the French caused an amount of suffering in various ways, which it is shocking to con-

template, and a repetition of it, after so short an interval, through our instrumentality, will justly make the name of European odious in the ears of the people. The character of the parties we shall be associated with will implicate us (as they already have done*) in acts which we shall not be able to help feeling as disgraceful, and which will probably end in disgusting us with their alliance. The want of any ground of complaint, on our own behalf, to justify the war, will not be compensated by the goodness of the cause of those whose part we shall have espoused ; for to wrest the government of a country from the hands of its sons, and place it in a band of foreigners, is a proceeding very difficult to be justified. In short, a war more causeless—more hopeless—more unjust, injurious, impolitic, and inglorious, will never have been waged.

We have abstained from alluding to the system of domestic government established at Buenos Ayres, because we do not consider such matters to be within our province. Exaggerated as its evils have been, still it is to be feared enough remains which is objectionable ; but we shall only make matters worse by interfering, as was shown during the French blockade, and will probably be shewn again if we persist in our hostile course. In the absence of danger or opposition the most despotic govern-

* The sacking of Colonia for instance. See also Appendix D for the character given in the French Chamber of Peers of the parties who now hold the reins of power in Monte Video.

ments relax their sternness, and it is a false sort of humanity to goad them into severities, and then think to excuse ourselves by crying out against them. Could we even succeed (which is doubtful) in overturning the present Government of Buenos Ayres, we should have no security against a recurrence of the same state which prepared the way for it, and of its ending again in a similar manner. The vicious circle ever seems to be, first licentiousness, then anarchy, and, lastly, despotism. It is not improbable Monte Video, also, will furnish another example of it, if we persist and succeed in propping up a government there, which has no elements of strength in itself, no hold on the country, and no stability except in foreign support. Our wisest course, therefore, would seem to be to leave all such matters entirely to the people of the country to manage as they choose, limiting our interference strictly to the redress of any grievances our subjects may suffer whilst obeying the laws of the countries they choose to reside in, and whilst abstaining from all interference in political matters.

Should these pages tend in any degree to the enforcement of these views, particularly with reference to the matter which forms the subject of them, their end will have been attained.

POSTSCRIPT.

SINCE the preceding pages were written, a short paragraph has appeared in the *Times* of the 21st January, giving accounts from Monte Video to the 22d November, which require some slight notice. That port is stated to be full of shipping, from which many perhaps will infer that business was very active there, whereas it was just the contrary, the town being closely invested by Oribe, and there being no business at all doing. The unusual number of vessels in the port was owing to the blockade of Buenos Ayres, which prevented them from entering that port, and drove them into Monte Video. Sometimes a heavy gale drives vessels from the Downs into Ramsgate harbour ; yet who would cite this as a proof of prosperity ?

In this same paragraph, the old story is again told about the advantages that will accrue from the opening of the rivers. Persons reading these statements will naturally suppose that some *new* trade is referred to which we have not enjoyed before. What then will be their surprise when they are told that these said rivers have always been open to us (with short interruptions) as long as Buenos Ayres itself has—that is, for the last thirty-eight years—and that we have always had all the trade they afford, excepting that of Paraguay, which was

closed by its own authorities ? This also was opened in 1842 or 1843, but the amount of it was so trifling that it made no perceptible difference in the aggregate trade of the River Plate. What Paraguay may become in the course of a hundred years, it is of course impossible to say, but to talk of it as being at present a "rich country," in a commercial point of view, is sheer romance. No country can be rich in this sense without an abundance of such products as are suited to the wants of other countries, and as those countries will accept in exchange for their own. In this sense there is perhaps scarcely a poorer people in the world than the Paraguayans ; which is not to be wondered at when it is considered that for the last thirty years (with slight intervals) they have been excluded by their own Government from all intercourse with foreigners, and consequently have had no inducement to raise any thing but what was requisite for their own simple wants. That they possess a *soil* which *could* if properly cultivated produce a great many things is very probable, but the same thing may be said of the whole globe. Mere soil is the cheapest ingredient, in new and poor countries, in the production of wealth. *Capital*, a thing much scarcer and of much more difficult attainment than soil, is requisite, with a great many other necessary accompaniments, especially *time*. Even under all conceivable advantages, wealth is of very slow growth, as the example of our own colonies shews. Should our Government, con-

trary to our expectations, be induced to listen to these romantic stories, and to sacrifice the actual trade of Buenos Ayres and Monte Video for the expected trade of Paragray, it will be indeed throwing away the substance for the shadow. We are the more induced to trust that such will not be the case, as these expeditions up the rivers are diametrically opposed to the instructions of the English and French Governments, as will be seen by the dispatch from M. Guizot to Baron Deffaudis, Appendix E. Those instructions state distinctly that the endeavour to open the free navigation of the rivers is only to be made in a friendly way after the other matters have been settled ; and they particularly dwell upon the necessity of not exciting the “ natural uneasiness and distrust of the Argentine Government ” on this subject.

In direct opposition to this the Ministers have placed the opening of the rivers in the first part of their plan of proceedings, and have set about it in the most violent and offensive manner, so as to destroy all chance of accomplishing what was the main object of their mission—the pacification of the River Plate. Such being the case, we cannot conceive these proceedings will be approved of at home.

A P P E N D I X.

A.

Extract of a Dispatch from M. GUIZOT to the French Ambassador at the Court of St. James's, dated Paris, January 21st, 1845.

You are aware of the ferocious warfare which desolates the left bank of La Plata. In consequence of its disputes with the Government of the republic of Buenos Ayres, the King's Government had allowed itself to be drawn into an interference in the local struggles which more particularly divide the republic of Monte Video. By the treaty of the 29th of October, 1840, France made peace with General Rosas; at the same time she renounced all participation in the internal quarrels of the country, on condition that the independence of the republic of Monte Video should be respected. Since that period war has continued. A former President of the republic of Buenos Ayres has laid siege to the city of Monte Video, which has defended itself with obstinacy. The King's Government has often been pressed during the last four years to interfere once more in this contest; it has always refused to do so. Two principal reasons have determined it to abstain—first, the right to

meddle, without absolute necessity, in the affairs of the two independent states had not been acknowledged ; secondly, there has always been, moreover, sufficient reason for believing that the question would soon terminate of itself by the close of the war.

A part of the French emigrants established at Monte Video has thought proper to rise in insurrection against this policy of their Government. In spite of the reiterated warnings of their Consul, these French have taken arms for the defence of the existing Government of that republic against General Oribe, and have left nothing undone to compromise the national flag in this cause, thus arrogating to themselves the right of peace and war, which belongs to the King alone. We have combated this claim, as it was our duty to do. The King's Consul at Monte Video has energetically defended the principle of the neutrality of foreigners.

The French legion, however, have not laid down their arms, and this unexpected resolution of a part of the foreign residents has prolonged the resistance of the city. At present that resistance no longer appears on the point of terminating. The state of war is maintained, and with it all the sufferings which may result therefrom to the interests of those foreigners who have remained neuter. Commerce is interrupted by land and sea ; the city of Monte Video has been in a state of blockade for nearly two years ; and the country is ravaged by the excursions of the two armies. This state of things calls for a prompt termination, if we do not wish to allow the consummation of the ruin of those French who have remained faithful to their duty, and who urgently entreat our protection in the unfortunate and perilous situation in which the obstinate blindness of a part of their fellow-countrymen has so much contributed to plunge them.

B.

Extract from the Speech of LORD ABERDEEN.

28th June, 1845 (MORNING CHRONICLE).—

The EARL OF ABERDEEN said he should be most happy to contribute, by any means in his power, to open the navigation of the Plate, or any other river in any part of the world, to facilitate and extend the commerce of this country; but it was not so easy a matter as the Petitioners supposed to open that *which lawful authorities had declared should be closed.*

The Petitioners had spoken of a Treaty with this country, by which they alleged they were entitled to the navigation of the River Plate. *Now Buenos Ayres was the only organ of the combined States with which foreign powers could deal. Some of the Provinces had revolted, and war was now waging between them.* That their Lordships might judge of the manner in which the Petitioners had put forward their claims under the Treaty, he would compare their statement with the Treaty itself.

The Petitioners alleged that by this Treaty there should be reciprocal freedom of commerce between Great Britain and the United Provinces, and perfect freedom and security for British subjects there.

Now the article of the Treaty referred to was to this effect, “ That there should be between all the Territories
“ of Her Britannic Majesty in Europe and the Territories
“ of the United Provinces of Rio de la Plata reciprocal
“ freedom of commerce; that the British should have

“ liberty to come with their ships into all the Ports of the Territories aforesaid, ‘ *into which other foreigners are and may be permitted to come.*’ ” (Hear, hear, hear!) Therefore it appeared by the article of the Treaty that this country had only a right to claim that which was granted to other foreigners.

The article went on to say that the inhabitants of the two countries should enjoy perfect security for their commerce, “ subject to the laws and statutes of the two countries respectively,” so that this country was at the mercy of a foreign state choosing to make laws restrictive of free commerce, provided they gave us all that was enjoyed by the most favoured nations. (Hear.)

This country was now engaged in the endeavour to restore peace in the River Plate, and he hoped that the result would be an improvement in the present state of things, and a great extension of our commerce in those regions. *But we should lose more than we could possibly gain, if in dealing with these States we lost sight of the principles of justice.* (Hear, hear.) *They might be unwise in their commercial policy, and they might be following out a system which we might think imprudent and injurious as regarded their own interest as well as ours; but we were bound to respect the right of independent nations, be they weak or be they strong.*

C.

Extract from the Speeches of SIR ROBERT PEEL.

9th March, 1844 (TIMES).—

SIR ROBERT PEEL.—This war, it was not perhaps known, *was not a conflict so much between the Buenos Ayreans and the Monte Videans as between party and party: there was a powerful Buenos Ayrean party, in fact, even in Monte Video.* The war was between a Federal party and an Unitarian party; and mixed up with this party hatred was a bitter personal rivalry between the leaders—a rivalry of such extent that it was impossible that any reconciliation between those Generals could be hoped for.

18th May, 1844 (TIMES).—

In reply to the question which had been put, he was not prepared to say that there would be any forcible intervention on the part of England. *If our rights as a nation were violated by either party, Her Majesty's Government were of course determined, by force if necessary, to defend the interests of this country; but so long as the laws of nations were not violated, he was sure the House would with him see the importance of those considerations, which restrained any interference on the part of the Queen's Government. No doubt England could very well suppress the hostilities which were at present going forward, and might for a time establish peaceful relations; but*

what security would that furnish for a continuance of a state of peace? How could peace be rendered permanent unless we maintained on the spot that force by which hostilities were in the first instance terminated? In such a case this country would have to take upon itself the whole internal government of both the contending countries. He believed that France took pretty much the same view of the question that this country did, and that all good offices had been offered by France with a view to the amicable arrangement of the differences which existed; but France, he had no doubt, agreed with England, that no forcible intervention ought at the present moment to take place. Let the House only look at the consequences of such a precedent as that of a neutral State, greatly superior in power, interfering forcibly in the foreign relations, and therefore necessarily in the internal government of another State. *Such a right did not exist by the law of nations;* and if such a step were taken, other powerful States might likewise interfere, and we should then possess no right to remonstrate. On these grounds he must say that he thought England ought to pause before she set any example of interference. All he could promise, therefore, was continued attention to the subject which the Honourable Gentleman had brought under the consideration of the House; but he could not promise on the part of this country, and he did not expect that there would be on the part of France, any exercise of force.

14th July, 1845 (MORNING POST).—

SIR ROBERT PEEL.—Any information which I can give on the subject consistently with public interests I shall willingly accord to the Honourable Member.

The state of the case is this:—Rosas, in the exercise of his belligerent rights towards Monte Video, has a right to institute a blockade. We were disposed to admit that right on his part, provided the blockade was universal in its operation; but the French Government contested the right, and claimed that their vessels should have exemption. We then refused to admit the right to blockade unless it applied to vessels of all nations.

Since that time we have reason to believe that the French Government acquiesced in the right, and permitted its application to French vessels; whereupon we, providing that it was universal, consented to recognise the belligerent right of Rosas as far as Monte Video was concerned.

The Honourable Member also wishes to know whether Rosas has a right to prevent the ingress of our vessels into Paraguay. I believe that with respect to the large Rivers Paraguay and Parana, Rosas occupies both banks and claims the right of stopping the navigation in consequence of his occupation of those banks.

I think that he has no right in consequence of his blockade to prevent vessels entering the Plate, but whether he has a right to occupy the banks I am not prepared to say. Now the Honourable Member is aware that certain operations are in contemplation, by which it is hoped tranquillity will be restored; but in case any party wishes to have the best information respecting mercantile transactions, I should recommend such party to apply directly to the Foreign Office, where the best information will at once be given.

I give this general information in answer to the Honourable Member's question; but parties immediately interested had better apply directly to my noble friend the Secretary for Foreign Affairs.

D.

Extract from the Speech of M. LE COMTE DE GABRIAC in the French Chamber of Peers, on the 14th January, 1846.

The Monte Video Government does not deserve, to speak properly, the title of a national one. This Government has sold all it could lay its hands on—the excise and customs' duties—the buildings of the custom-house—the old buildings of the fortifications, and portions of its territory. It has sold even its cathedral, and the right of navigating the River Uruguay by steam for fifteen years. In a word, it is a Government devoid of nationality. It is maintained by a very small number of natives, and by that famous legion of which so much has been said. To induce foreigners to enlist in it, they were promised lodging gratis and a release from their debts. Thus this legion of 3,600 men was—the eight-ninth parts of it a collection of foreigners—and the ninth the scum of the natives. In my opinion, the triumph of Monte Video would be the greatest obstacle to the re-establishment of peace, which only Rosas can bestow.

E.

*Extract of a Dispatch from M. GUIZOT to BARON
DEFFAUDIS, dated Paris, 22nd March, 1845.*

It is expressly agreed between the two Governments of France and England, that if it is possible to take advantage of the new state of things which is about to commence, for the purpose of obtaining the opening of the tributaries of the Plata to freedom of navigation, the representatives of the two great powers are to take this matter in hand ; but only in case the opportunity should offer naturally, and when the other difficulties have been removed. It would no doubt be useful to open to European commerce these great rivers, which penetrate to the heart of South America ; still this is only for the present an object of secondary interest in comparison with the others which are being agitated in the River Plate, and it would be imprudent at the outset to augment by any kind of exigency the natural uneasiness and distrust of the Argentine Government.

THE END.



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